

Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area

GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

NEWSLETTER UPDATE

Newsletter No. 4

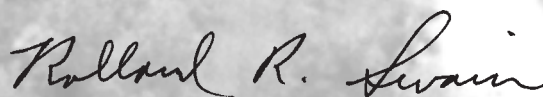
A Word from the Superintendent

In previous newsletters, we've discussed Congress's separation of the gorge from the rest of the area and also the purpose of the National Area. We've also presented and discussed some of the public comments we have received. All of this helps to lay a solid foundation for planning.

In this newsletter, we need to talk a little about our agency policies, which provide more "bricks" in the foundation. These policies apply to all areas we administer throughout the country. They are the "common thread" that ties all the areas together and makes them recognizable to the public wherever they are.

Also, we want to talk about how we're going to use all this information to plan for Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area.

Thanks for your time in reading these newsletters. We hope they are helpful. We value your comments at any time.



Rolland R. Swain
Superintendent
Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area

For additional information on the General Management Plan
contact Park Headquarters at 423-569-9778

website: www.nps.gov/biso/gmp_info.htm email: john_fischer@nps.gov

Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area

National Park Service Policy

The National Park Service's *Management Policies* includes these statements and ideas:

Policy sets the framework and provides direction for management decisions. Policy direction may be general or specific—it may prescribe the process by which decisions are made, how an action is to be accomplished, or the results to be achieved. ...Policy is approved by the Director and kept in written form. ...Following policy is required unless the Director or higher authority specifically approves an exception or unless Congress has provided specific guidance. ...Managers are required to apply policies in a consistent and professional manner in order to achieve what Congress intends for the entire national park system.

Policies cover many concerns such as how to manage natural and historic resources, interpret those resources to the public, visitor use, and facility development. Policy even guides how we plan.

Both law and policy require General Management Plans for all National Park Service administered areas. This broad type of planning is how the Service applies all the guidance available to it from legislation, policy and related guidelines, and information provided by the public and other agencies. The primary method of application is by *management units*.

Planning by Management Unit

Planning for the Big South Fork NRRRA will not be easy. It will be easier if we break it into smaller pieces. Smaller “bites” will make it easier to think about what resources are there, what use is occurring, and what goals there should be.

The idea of breaking up the National Area into smaller units actually gets its start in the area's legislation.

The most important breakdown is between the gorge and the “adjacent area.” Congress also gave direction for certain areas within the National Area when it referred to oil and gas operations, the access roads into the gorge, motorboat use on the river, Charit Creek lodge, and others.

...four types of units...

There are four basic types of management units the Park Service uses: *natural, cultural, development, and special use*. Certain policies apply within each type. Some actions or uses that are acceptable in one type of management unit may not be acceptable in another type. Therefore, it is important what an area is called.

Natural Units: The primary goal in a natural unit is conserving natural resources and ecological processes and providing public use that does not harm those resources and processes. Examples would include the large forested areas and specific areas such as Yahoo Falls.

Cultural Units: These units are primarily managed for preserving historical and archaeological resources and their settings and interpreting these resources to the public. Blue Heron would be an example.

Development Units: These units are managed to provide facilities needed by visitors and National Area personnel. The Bandy Creek facility area would be an example.

Special Use Units: These units include private lands within the boundary or areas where others possess certain legal rights. Examples would be road rights-of-way owned by the State or counties and oil and gas fields.

...subunits...

While all parts of the National Area will have one of the above four management unit names, they will also



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get a “second name.” For instance, a natural unit inside the gorge might be named “*natural/special protection unit*” to recognize the special protection Congress wants for the gorge. An oil and gas field might be a “*special use/minerals management unit*.”

Desired Future Conditions

Desired future conditions are like goals. They’re what you want. It’s like what you want your yard to look like...more flowerbeds in front, more trees in back...less grass!

For each management unit within the National Area, desired future conditions will be identified and described. These descriptions will include goals for resource conditions and for visitor use. They will be based on all we have learned from the National Area legislation, information about the specific area, public comments, and National Park Service policy.

There may be different ideas, or goals, for the same management unit! This is OK since we all don’t think alike on everything. Different ideas are OK if they “line up” with the legislation, available information about the area, and policy. When this happens, we will present *alternatives* in the General Management Plan.

Let’s see how all this comes together.

An Example

An example of how we would apply *management units* in planning for the National Area is to consider the Twin Arches area. The arches are a very important natural resource in the National Area. Right now, a gravel road leads to a parking area where picnic tables are available and a



trail about a mile long leads to the arch formations. A bulletin board at the parking area provides information to visitors. Signs at the arches interpret their geologic significance and instruct visitors on safety precautions.

For this example, let’s say a few people have said that it’s too far to walk to the arches and that the road should be lengthened. And, there should be more picnic tables and nicer rest rooms near the parking area. Let’s also say that some people want more to do when they get to the arches...they’d like picnic tables and more trails or stairs leading up to the top of the arches. (No one actually suggested these things.)

The planning team would identify the importance of Twin Arches. The team would also see if the formation is located in the gorge or the “adjacent area.” (The arches are certainly very important—to the local people, to the State that gave the arches a special designation, and to many visitors to the National Area. The arches are located in the gorge.)

Because the arches are located in the gorge, we would look for any direction Congress gave about the gorge in the National Area legislation. We would find that within the gorge, motorized vehicles are only allowed on eleven designated access roads. So, the idea of extending the road to the arches would not be permissible.

The idea of adding picnic tables and rest rooms at the existing parking area would be possible since the parking area is located in the “adjacent area” where additional development is permissible when it doesn’t cause significant damage.

Adding picnic tables, additional trails, and stairs at the arches would depend on the “desired future conditions” identified for

Twin Arches. The people who said they wanted more tables and stairs at the arches had a certain “picture” in their minds of what they wanted the area to be like and how they wanted to use it. That “picture” is an *alternative* to what is there now.

Based on the planning team’s understanding of the importance of Twin Arches, we would also have in mind a description of what we think Twin Arches should be like in the future. We’d probably write a description that would include statements like...

- The arches are in a natural condition.
- Natural processes are occurring with no significant human interference.
- The arches are in a natural setting.
- Visitors have several views of the arches



to appreciate their size and shapes.

- Visitors understand how the arches were formed and are continuing to change.
- Visitors understand the need to protect the arches and preserve them for future visitors.

Statements like these are based on National Park Service policies.

The planning team would discuss all the ideas, or

alternatives, for Twin Arches in the General Management Plan. The public would then review the alternatives and make comments. Considering the public’s comments, the National Park Service would then choose the alternative conditions for Twin Arches that it believes are best for the resource and for present and future visitors.

That is an example of how the planning team will plan for the resources and visitor use of the Big South Fork.

Superintendent
Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area
4564 Leatherwood Ford Rd.
Oneida, TN 37841

